

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 025250

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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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TAGE: PFOR, PINT, NATO, UR

SUBJ: BREZHNEV

FOLLOWING NATO SITCEN 2403 DATED 24 JAN 75, REPEATED FOR UR INFO.

QYOTE:

N A T O C O N F I D E N T I A L SITECENT 2403

NADA/ASSESSMENT/JAN 019/ NATO BRUSSELS/

24 JAN 75

FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT FROM CANADIAN

EMBASSY IS MOSCOW SUBMITTED TO NATO

SITUATION CENTRE BY THE CANADIAN DELEGATION

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S POSITION AND THE INTERNAL SITUATION

IN THE USSR

AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER ONE MIGHT HAVE SAID

THAT 1974 HAD BEEN AN EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR BREZHNEV:

TWO SUMMIT VISITS WITH POMPIDOU AND GISCARD D ESTAING; OFFICIAL

VISITS BY NIXON AND SCHMIDT; A SUMMIT ON SOVIET SOIL WITH A

NEWLY-APPOINTED AMERICAN PRESIDENT; CONFUSION AND CRISIS IN

THE WEST COMPARED TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE

USSR; A GOOD HARVEST; SLOW BUT STEADY PROGRESS IN THE ECONOMY

SLOW BUT STEADY PROGRESS TOWARDS A CONCLUSION OF THE CSCE;

AND AGREEMENT ON A MEETING OF EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES; AND

EVEN IF THERE HAVE BEEN FRUSTRATIONS IN GETTING HOPED-FOR

ECONOMIC BONANAZAS FROM BONN AND WASHINGTON; THE RUSSIANS HAVE

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PAGE 02 STATE 025250

NOT DONE SO BADLY;

AGAINST THIS THE SETBACKS IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES

WOULD NOT APPEAR OVERWHELMING; USA TRADE BILL AND AMENDMENTS TO TRADE AGREEMENT; SOME LOSS OF INFLUENCE IN MIDEAST; ESPECIALLY EGYPT; FAILURE TO PROCEED WITH SOME OF BREZHNEV-AUTHORED ECONOMIC PLANS; FAILURE TO MAKE HEADWAY TOWARDS A NEW QUOTE BREZHNEV UNQUOTE PLANS; ECONOMIC RESULTS FOR 1974 AND A PLAN FOR 1975 WHICH PROMISES RELATIVELY POOR RETURN ON INVESTMENTS, PRODUCTIVITY PROBLEMS AND LOWER CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTION. NORMALLY NONE OF THESE FACTORS WOULD APPEAR TO OFFSET THOSE IN BREZHNEV'S FAVOUR, EXCEPT OF COURSE THAT IN THE LAST ANALYSIS IT IS DOMESTIC AFFAIRS WHICH REALLY COUNT IN CALCULATING THE DURABILITY OF ANY SOVIET LEADER. THERE ARE INDICATIONS, THEREFORE, THAT THE POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE IN SOME TROUBLE, BREZHNEV HAS OF COURSE AVOIDED THE PITTFALLS OF KHRUSHCHEV AND SUCCEEDED IN AVOIDING THE TEMPTATION OF GATHERING ALL POWER INTO HIS HANDS. KHRUSHCHEV WAS COMPLETELY ISOLATED WHEN HE WAS OVERTHROWN. BREZHNEV HAS SKILFULLY KEPT HIS COLLEAGUES ASSOCIATED WIT ALL HIS MAJOR INTERNATIONAL MOVES, HE HAS TRIED TO MAKE DETENTE A POLICY ENDORSED BY THW WHOLE POLITBURO BUT HE CANNOT SUCCEED IN THIS ENTIRELY SINCE, BY THE NATURE OF SOVIET POLITICS, HE HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE AUTHOR OF THESE POLICIES, PARTLY BY THE IRRESISTIBLE URGE TO BE NUMBER ONE. NEVERTHELESS SOMEONE SERIOUSLY MISCALCULATED ON BOTH THE MIDEAST AND TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE USA. IT IS QUITE CONCEIVABLE THAT BREZHNEV HIMSELF REACHED THESE CONCLUSIONS, AS WELLAS HIS POSSIBLE CRITICS, AND ADJUSTED QUICKLL TO THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, THW WOULD BE CONSITENT WITH THE CAUTIONS NATURE OF BREZHNEV AND WOULD HELP TO MAINTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE HIERARCHY. UP UNTIL NOW IT HAS SEEMED LIKELY THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN BREZHNEV'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN THE SOLIDARITY AND STABILITY OF THE REGIME WAS THAT IT IS A CAREFULLY BALANCED MACHINE, THE REMOVAL OF ANY IMPOTNAT PIECE FROM WHICH WOULD HAVE ENDANGERED ITS SURVIAL, THERE SEEMS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THIS SITUATION HAS CHANGED. IT MAY BE THAT THE HEALTH OF BREZHNEV MAY OBLIGE THE SOVIET LEADERS TO ADJUST TO THE RMOVA OF THE KEY ELELMENT, BU THIS IS PROBABLY THE ONLY REASON WHY HE WOULD STEP DOWN. THERE APPEARS TO BE NO ONE DOMINANT PERSONALITY WILLING TO TRY TO

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PAGE 03 STATE 025250

OUT HIM, OR INDEED ABLE TO FILL HIS SHOES. SINCE BREZHNEV HAS KEPT TO AS MUCH COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AS IS POSSIBLE IN THIS COUNTRY HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD PROBABLY LIKE THIS SITUATION TO CONTINUE, RATHER THAN TO RISK THE UNCERTAINTIES OF CHAV NEVERTHELESS, NO MATTER HOW ONE READS IT, THE POSITION OF BREZHNEV DOES APPEAR WEAKENED WHETHER BY HEALTH, BY VOLUNTARY RETREAT FROM UNSUCCESSFUL POLICIES OR BY PRESSURE FROM CRITICS. SOMETHING DOES APPEAR OUT OF JOINT. THE SITUATION COULD CONTINUE AS AT PRESENT FOR SOME TIME, AND INDEED THE QUOTE CRISIS UNQUOTE (IF THAT IS WHAT IS IS),HAS CONTINUED SO

LONG, IT PRACTICALLY RULES OUT THE LIKEHOOD THAT AN ATTEMPT
TO OUST BREZHNEV IS BEHIND IT. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HIS POLICIES
WILL PROBABLY BE CARRIED ON IN AN EMASCULATED FORM, WITH
GREATER EMPHASIS ON HARD-LINE ASPECTS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS.

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